



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

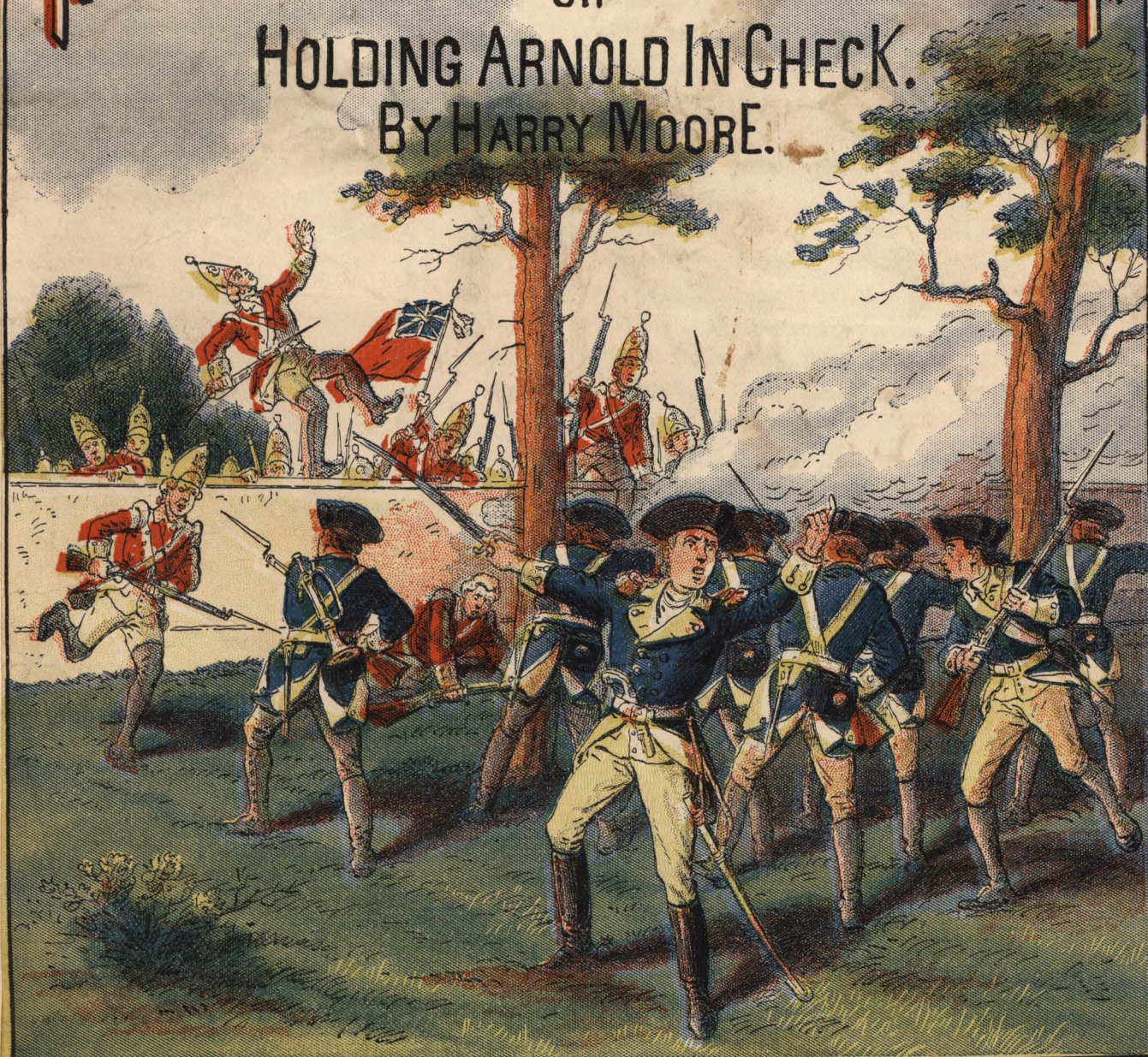
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No. 31.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 2, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' BIG CONTRACT; OR— HOLDING ARNOLD IN CHECK. BY HARRY MOORE.



"Come on!" cried Dick, in a ringing voice; "come on, and we will show Arnold how the 'Liberty Boys' treat traitors!"

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CHAPTER I.

DICK AND THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

It was the first week in February of the year 1781.

General Washington, with his army, had his headquarters near New York City.

He was keeping a close watch on General Clinton, who occupied New York City at that time.

It was a cold, wintry morning.

Snow was falling.

The commander-in-chief sat before a huge fireplace in his room in the house which he occupied as headquarters.

General Washington held a letter in his hand.

He had just finished reading the letter.

The commander-in-chief was gazing at the floor as if in a deep study.

His brow was knitted.

Evidently the contents of the letter had worried him.

The commander-in-chief lifted his eyes and gazed into the roaring fire in the huge fireplace for a few moments.

Presently he turned his head and looked out through the window at the driving snow.

After gazing out of the window for a few moments, Washington again turned his attention to the letter, which he still held in his hand.

He looked at the letter, seemed to re-read a portion of it, and then folded it up and laid it on the table.

Then the commander-in-chief spoke, as if thinking aloud.

"It must be done," he said. "Arnold must be held in check. The burning and pillaging down in Virginia must be stopped."

General Washington was silent a few moments.

Then he rapped on the table.

The door opened and an orderly entered.

"Orderly," the commander-in-chief said, "send Dick later to me at once."

"Yes, your excellency."

The orderly saluted and withdrew.

He was gone perhaps half an hour.

Then he returned, accompanied by a handsome young fel-

low of apparently twenty-one or twenty-two years of age.

"Dick Slater!" the orderly announced.

Then he withdrew.

Dick saluted.

"You sent for me, your excellency?" he asked.

"Yes, Dick," was the reply.

Then Washington looked at Dick, earnestly, for a few moments.

He motioned toward a stool.

"Be seated, Dick," he said, "I wish to have a talk with you."

Dick took the seat indicated.

Then he looked toward the commander-in-chief, expectantly.

Washington was silent for a few moments.

Then he turned an earnest gaze on his companion.

"Dick," he said, "I have just received bad news."

"Indeed?" remarked Dick. "I am sorry."

"Yes, Dick, I have received bad news. Arnold is down in Virginia, burning and pillaging right and left."

"That is bad news, indeed."

"Yes, Dick. Arnold has one thousand men, and the people are powerless."

"I should judge that they would be, your excellency. It would take an organized force superior to his to hold him in check, for Arnold is a terrible fighter."

"So he is, Dick; so he is. And it is terrible to think of him as a traitor, fighting against the cause which he used to espouse and which he at one time loved, I am sure."

The commander-in-chief's tone was sad.

Dick was silent.

He knew that when Benedict Arnold was fighting on the side of liberty, General Washington had loved him as a brother.

The youth realized that the heart of the commander-in-chief was torn with grief over the downfall of Arnold, whom he had loved so well.

Presently the commander-in-chief spoke again.

"Arnold must be held in check, and there is but one way to do it."

"And that, your excellency?" remarked Dick, as the commander-in-chief paused.

"I must send a force down there to oppose him."

"Ah!"

Dick's face lighted up.

An eager light came into his eyes.

He believed that he knew now why General Washington had sent for him.

Washington saw the eager look on the youth's face, and smiled.

"Yes, I must send a force down there to oppose him," he repeated.

"I should think that would be a good plan, your excellency."

"It is the only thing to do, Dick; and I have decided to send Lafayette, with a force of about one thousand men."

Washington paused.

He was watching Dick, closely.

Dick's face fell.

A look of disappointment appeared thereon.

Washington saw this.

A half-quizzical smile appeared upon his face.

"I shall send Lafayette and his men to the head of the Chesapeake Bay, and they will proceed on down to the lower end of the bay. They will go on board ships and will land in Virginia in the vicinity of the James River."

"A very good plan, your excellency," said Dick.

"Yes, it will reduce the marching to a minimum."

Washington was silent for a few moments.

Then he looked at his youthful companion, and, with a half-smile, said:

"I am thinking of sending another force to co-operate with Lafayette, Dick," he said.

Dick's face brightened.

The eager look returned to his eyes.

"Indeed?" he remarked.

"Yes, Dick. I have in my army, here, a company made up of young men who are known as 'The Liberty Boys of Seventy-six.' Their captain is a young man by the name of Dick Slater. I am thinking of sending this company down into Virginia to co-operate with Lafayette. As this is a company of cavalry, I think it could do good work against Arnold, don't you?"

"I think so, your excellency. At any rate, I can safely promise you that if you send it down there it will do the very best work of which it is capable."

"I am sure of that, Dick. I have the utmost faith in Dick Slater and his company of brave 'Liberty Boys.' You have been often tried and never found wanting."

"Thank you," said Dick. "I trust that we shall never be found wanting."

"I am not afraid that you ever will be, Dick. And now, are you ready to undertake the long trip I have spoken of?"

"Quite ready, your excellency. Indeed, I may say that I am eager to undertake it; and I am confident I can safely speak for each and every one of the 'Liberty Boys.' It would not matter, however; you have but to command and we will obey."

"I am well aware of that, Dick, but I like to consult the wishes and conveniences of my men whenever and wherever possible."

"We shall be glad to go on this expedition, your excellency," said Dick. "We shall be glad for the reason that it will give us something to do, and, besides, we are always happy when we are doing anything that will aid the great cause."

"Nobly spoken, Dick. That is the kind of sentiment I like to hear expressed."

"How soon will you wish us to start, your excellency?"

"At once, Dick."

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "That will suit us all the better. We will start this very day."

"Just as soon as you like, Dick. And now for a few instructions: You will go to Virginia, and if you reach there ahead of Lafayette, you will do all you can to hold Arnold in check till Lafayette comes. He will proceed to Richmond, and you must have a man there on the lookout for him."

"Very well, your excellency."

The youth remained perhaps half an hour longer.

Washington gave him full instructions.

Verbal instructions would be all that would be necessary.

Dick had a wonderful memory.

He never needed written instructions.

Besides, written instructions are dangerous things to have in one's possession.

If it should so happen that one was captured, the plans would become known to the enemy.

Washington always gave verbal orders and instructions, whenever possible.

At the end of half an hour Dick had a full understanding of what was expected of him and his "Liberty Boys."

He knew just what Washington wished them to do.

Then he bade the commander-in-chief good-by, and withdrew.

Dick hastened back to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

"Hello, Dick! What's your hurry? What's in the wind, now?" greeted Bob Estabrook, a bright, handsome fellow of about Dick's age.

He was Dick's nearest and dearest friend, and knew Dick so well that he was sure, judging by his friend's looks, that something was on the tapis.

"What makes you think there is something in the wind, Bob?"

"Your looks."

"My looks?"

"Yes."

"How do I look?"

"Happy."

"Happy, eh?"

"Yes, and somewhat excited. You look, well—as if you had heard some extremely good news."

"I have, Bob."

"You have?"

"Yes."

Bob looked interested.

"Tell us the news, old man."

A number of the "Liberty Boys" crowded forward.

"Yes, tell us the news, Dick."

"Out with it!"

"We want to hear it!"

"Tell us quick!"

Such were a few of the exclamations given utterance to. Dick laughed.

"All right, boys," he said. "I'll tell you the news. We are to go on an expedition."

"Hurrah!" cried Bob.

"Where are we to go, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Down into Virginia, Mark."

"What! Away down into Virginia?"

"Hurrah for Old Virginia!" cried Bob, the irrepressible.

"Why are we to go down there, Dick?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"Arnold is down there, burning and pillaging, Sam. We are to go down there for the purpose of putting a stop to this and holding him in check, if possible.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob. "We can hold Arnold in check, if anybody can."

"I think so, Bob."

"When are we to start, Dick?" asked Mark.

"Right away."

"Right away?"

"Yes—that is, just as soon as we can get ready."

"And how soon will that be?"

"Oh, I don't know. We ought to be able to be ready to start soon after dinner, I should think; we haven't very much to do. We won't want to take much with us as we will wish to travel as rapidly as possible. We will live off of the country as we travel through."

"Yes, I think we can get ready that soon. But, say, that will be a big trip down there, won't it?"

"Quite a long ride; but it won't be the first one for us."

Dick now gave the order for the "Liberty Boys" to begin making preparations for the journey.

They went to work at once.

They looked to their weapons, first, then they selected the clothing which they would wear.

Having selected it, they donned it.

By noon they had everything fixed.

They ate a hearty dinner and then, saddling and bridling their horses, mounted and rode away toward the South, through the driving snowstorm.

CHAPTER II.

IN OLD VIRGINIA.

The "Liberty Boys" made their way southward as rapidly as possible.

The weather was severe, and the youths suffered considerable from the cold, but they did not complain.

They were used to hardships.

However, the farther south they got the milder became the weather.

At last they crossed the Potomac and were in Virginia.

The weather was now comparatively pleasant.

The Blue Ridge Mountains cut off the cold, northwest wind.

The sun shone brightly each day.

It did not seem like winter.

The youths rode steadily southward.

They were headed for Richmond.

When they were yet about fifty miles distant from the city they rode into a small village late in the evening.

As had been their custom, the youths scattered and went to the different houses for the purpose of securing food for themselves and feed for their horses.

There was a tavern in the village, but, of course, it could not accommodate one hundred of them.

About a dozen went to the tavern, the others dispersing to private houses.

It happened that the majority of the people of this village were patriots, and when they learned that Dick's party was made up of patriot soldiers, they were delighted.

They were overjoyed when they learned that Dick and his men had come to that vicinity for the purpose of trying to hold Arnold in check.

Arnold's depredations in that part of the country had filled them with terror.

They were living in constant fear of an attack from him.

"I don't see what you can expect to accomplish, young man," said the tavern-keeper to Dick. "There's only about a hundred of you, while Arnold has a thousand men. You cannot hope to do much against such odds."

"As I understand it," said Dick, "Arnold divides his force up into four or five small parties. Is not that right?"

The man nodded.

"Yes, that is the case. His men are doing their work in several localities at the same time. That will make it difficult to do much against them."

"Still, it will be better for us, too," said Dick; "we will be able to hold our own against any one of the parties, where, were all his force together, we would not dare to try to fight against him."

"That's so; but you will be outnumbered at least two to one even then."

Dick smiled.

"If we don't encounter worse odds than that we shall be all right," he said.

The tavern-keeper shook his head, somewhat dubiously.

"That fellow Arnold is a bad man, they say," he said; "I don't know whether you would be able to hold your own against double your number or not."

"We will be willing to risk it," Dick said, quietly.

"We can lick twice our number of redcoats, any day!" declared Bob.

"And the quicker we get the chance to try it the better we will like it," said Mark Morrison.

They were to have the chance sooner than they expected.

They had just finished their supper when a youth of the village came rushing into the tavern, greatly excited and almost out of breath.

"The redcoats!" he gasped. "Arnold is here!"

Instantly all was excitement.

Dick and his comrades rushed out of doors.

It was not yet quite dark.

A body of horsemen was riding into the village.

As Dick and his comrades emerged from the tavern the horsemen came to a stop.

A dozen of the men leaped to the ground.

They ran into a house in front of which they had stopped and soon returned, bearing various articles of plunder.

The inmates of the house fled by way of the back doorway.

The redcoats divided up into a number of small parties and surrounded several of the houses.

Meanwhile, Dick was not idle.

He sent runners to the different houses where his men had gone for supper, and soon all the "Liberty Boys" were gathered together, ready for work.

They were eager to get to work, too.

It had been quite a while since they had been engaged in a battle with the British, and they were ready and eager for the fray.

The redcoats were so busy that they did not notice the "Liberty Boys."

They had been carrying things with such a high hand, without meeting with any check or opposition, that they were careless.

They had no suspicion that a patriot force was anywhere near.

They would have laughed had they been told that a patriot force was within striking distance of them.

They had had no scouts or spies out, and the approach of Dick and the "Liberty Boys" had not been discovered.

At the order from Dick the youths mounted.

They drew their swords, with their right hands, and held the reins in the left.

As soon as all were ready, Dick gave the order:

"Charge!"

Instantly the youths spurred their horses forward.

The redcoats did not notice the presence of the "Liberty Boys" until the latter were almost upon them.

Then there was a scattering of redcoats.

They were hurled aside, by the horses, as if they had been straw men.

The youths showed the fellows no mercy.

They used their swords with great effect, and mercilessly.

They were well aware that these redcoats had been robbing, pillaging, in many cases murdering, and felt that they deserved death.

Besides, war is war.

The leading idea in war is to kill as many of the enemy as possible.

The redcoats uttered wild cries of surprise and terror.

They scattered, and many mounted their horses and spurred away out of the village.

Others fled afoot.

Others, still, were killed or wounded, and fell at the first fierce onslaught of the "Liberty Boys."

The youths set out in pursuit of those who had mounted and fled.

They did not keep up the chase a great distance, however.

It was now quite dark, and it was impossible to keep on the track of the fleeing redcoats.

So they gave up the chase and rode back to the village

They had no difficulty in finding their way back.

They had a beacon light to guide them.

This was the burning house; the redcoats having applied the torch to the first house they had pillaged.

They had accomplished this before Dick and his men had made the attack.

The house did not burn to the ground, however.

The residents of the village turned out, en masse, and helped put the fire out.

It was a hard fight, but they succeeded, and they had just got the fire extinguished as the youths rode back into the village.

The people were delighted.

Arnold's marauders had met with a check.

It was the first setback they had received.

But, as Dick assured the people of the village, it was not to be the last.

"We will put a check on the business, if we do not succeed in stopping it altogether," he said.

"I believe you will," the tavern-keeper said, admiringly.

"I didn't think, at first, that you would be able to do much, but after this I shall be willing to believe almost anything of you and your men. You are not afraid of anything."

"We certainly are not afraid of the redcoats," said Bob.

Dick decided to spend the night in the village.

The people were only too glad to have the youths stay.

They feared the redcoats might return.

The redcoats, who had met with death at the hands of the "Liberty Boys," were buried by the citizens of the village, and the wounded British were taken into the tavern and their wounds were dressed.

The people were humane.

Dick decided that it would be a good idea to keep watch for the redcoats, so he placed sentinels at the edge of the village.

It was well that he did so.

At about two o'clock in the morning the sentinels raised an alarm.

Instantly Dick and his "Liberty Boys" were up and out.

They had simply thrown themselves down on blankets, spread on the floors of the different houses, where they were to spend the night, and all they had to do was to leap to their feet and rush out of doors.

Weapons in hand, the "Liberty Boys" rushed toward the point from which the alarm had sounded.

It was tolerably dark, but not so dark but that it was possible to see a body of horsemen outlined against the horizon.

As Dick and the "Liberty Boys" advanced to the edge

of the village, the body of horsemen came riding forward at a rapid gait.

There was no doubt in Dick's mind but that this force was the same one that had visited the village that evening.

Doubtless the redcoats had returned, expecting to find the people of the village without protection.

The probabilities were that they supposed Dick and his men had taken their departure.

If this was the case, they were soon to be undeceived.

Pistols in hand, the youths stood their ground and awaited the approach of the enemy.

When the redcoats were close enough so that a pistol-shot volley would be effective, Dick gave the order to fire.

Crash! Roar!

The sound of the volley awoke the echoes for miles around.

It also awoke every person within the limits of the village.

Yells of pain and anger went up from the redcoats.

A number of saddles were emptied.

"Give them another volley!" cried Dick. "Fire!"

Crash! Roar!

Again some saddles were emptied.

Again shouts were given utterance to.

Considerable execution had been done by the "Liberty Boys."

The redcoats had not expected to find Dick and his men still there, and they decided that it would be best to not try to accomplish anything more.

They accordingly whirled around and rode away into the darkness at top speed.

Dick cautioned his sentinels to keep a sharp lookout, and then the "Liberty Boys" returned to their interrupted slumbers.

There was no further disturbance that night.

The people were profuse in their thanks to Dick and his comrades next morning.

They realized that their property, their houses, and, perhaps, even the lives of many of them had been saved by Dick and his "Liberty Boys."

But for their presence the redcoats would have plundered the houses and set fire to them.

After breakfast the youths mounted their horses and rode away.

"You had better keep your eyes open," were the last words addressed to Dick by the tavern-keeper, who had taken a great liking to the youth. "You are likely to run onto a gang of redcoats at any moment. Don't let them take you by surprise."

"We'll keep a sharp lookout for them," was Dick's reply.

Then they rode away at a gallop.

"Well, we've done some good already, Dick," said Bob, as they rode along, side by side.

"Yes, Bob, we were the means of saving that village from being burned to the ground."

"So we were. I hope we'll run against another gang of redcoats to-day."

"You're getting to be bloodthirsty, Bob."

"Not that, Dick. The redcoats have been carrying things here with such a high hand that it makes it a pleasant task to put a stop to their work."

At every house they came to Dick paused and made inquiries with regard as to whether or not any redcoats had been seen in the neighborhood recently.

They did not ride so very rapidly on this day.

They were nearing their journey's end.

They would be within a few miles of Richmond by evening, so they could afford to go slow and keep a lookout for marauding parties of Arnold's redcoats.

About the middle of the afternoon Dick and his party were riding along the road leading through the timber.

They were going up a rather steep hill.

Presently they reached the top.

Here a surprise awaited them.

As they rode over the crest of the hill they came face to face with about two hundred redcoats.

At the head of the column of redcoats rode Arnold, the traitor.

CHAPTER III.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" CLASH WITH ARNOLD'S MEN.

The surprise was mutual.

The redcoats had not been expecting that they would meet an enemy.

They reined up their horses and came to a stop.

They did not know, of course, but that there might be a thousand men in Dick's party.

This gave Dick and his men an advantage.

They could look down and see just how many redcoats there were.

Dick saw that the redcoats outnumbered his party by two to one, at least.

This made no difference, however.

He decided to attack the redcoats.

The positions of the two forces were in favor of Dick and his party.

Dick felt that the superiority of his position would about even up matters.

Dick drew his sword, waved it in the air, and gave the command:

"Charge!"

As he gave the order he put spurs to his horse and dashed down the slope, straight toward Arnold and his men.

The "Liberty Boys" followed their daring young leader.

As they did so they gave utterance to ringing cheers.

This was the kind of work they liked.

Nothing pleased them better than to become engaged in an encounter, such as this one promised to be.

They liked to dash forward at breakneck speed and hurl themselves upon a detachment of the enemy.

It was thrilling.

It caused the blood to leap in their veins.

The action of Dick and his "Liberty Boys" was well calculated to bring dismay to the hearts of the redcoats.

The movement was so bold that it caused a feeling of terror to take possession of them.

The "Liberty Boys" kept advancing over the crest of the hill and the instant they came in sight of the enemy, they uttered cheers and dashed on down the slope at reckless speed.

Dick and the extreme head of the column of "Liberty Boys" struck the redcoats with great force.

Dick had aimed straight for Arnold.

"I will kill the traitor!" he said to himself.

While Dick was yet a few yards distant, however, Arnold's horse became frightened and unmanageable.

The animal whirled and dashed back through the ranks of the redcoats and on down the slope.

Dick was disappointed.

He had hoped to meet Arnold in single combat.

Dick was not bloodthirsty, but he would have done his duty.

He would have killed the traitor.

The flight of Arnold, even though unintentional, had its effect in aiding in the demoralization of the redcoats.

They had no leader, they did not know how many of the enemy there were, consequently they had no heart for a fight with the "Liberty Boys."

Instead of standing their ground and trying to hold their own they turned their horses and dashed away in the wake of their leader.

After them came the "Liberty Boys."

Cheer after cheer went up from the youths.

They urged their horses forward at their best speed.

It was an exciting chase.

It bade fair to be a long-drawn-out chase, also.

The horses of the redcoats and those of the "Liberty Boys" seemed to be about evenly matched in speed.

It would be a difficult matter for the "Liberty Boys" to overtake the redcoats.

Soon all were down the slope, and were racing along over a level country.

The redcoats now had an opportunity to size up their pursuers.

Arnold had finally succeeded in getting his horse under control.

He looked back and saw that there were not nearly so many men in the pursuing party as there were in his own party.

Arnold was a fighter.

At any rate, he had been a fierce fighter when he was in the patriot army.

He had lost a good deal of his dash and daring, however, when he left the patriot army and joined the ranks of the British.

He realized that should he be captured he would meet with the fate of a traitor.

He would be hanged.

This knowledge seemed to inspire him with a feeling of fear.

It had the effect of taking away his efficiency as a fighter.

It was for this reason that he had been sent down into Virginia, with a small force of men, to burn and pillage, instead of being given an important command.

When he saw, however, that his men outnumbered those of the pursuing party, at least two to one, he decided to stop and offer battle.

He gave the command and his men stopped and faced about.

If he thought that the pursuing party would stop, he was quickly undeceived.

Each and every individual member of the company of "Liberty Boys" was recklessly brave.

They had no desire to stop.

A fight with the redcoats was just what they wanted.

They were delighted when they saw the redcoats stop and face about.

Dick waved his sword in the air.

"Forward!" he cried. "Charge the scoundrels! First the pistol, then the sword!"

The "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to a ringing cheer and each and every one drew a pistol.

They urged their horses forward at increased speed.

When they were within seventy-five yards of the enemy the redcoats fired a volley from their dragoon pistols.

Two or three of the "Liberty Boys" were wounded, but not seriously.

Onward rode the "Liberty Boys."

A little thing like a volley from pistols would not stop them.

Nothing short of a stone wall would have stopped that rush.

And it would have had to be a very thick wall at that.

Before the redcoats could draw another pistol and fire a second volley, the "Liberty Boys" were within twenty yards of them.

"Give it to them!" cried Dick. "Fire!"

Up came the pistols.

Crash! Roar!

The youths were close enough for the volley to do considerable damage.

A number of the redcoats tumbled off their horses.

Then the "Liberty Boys" thrust the pistols back in their belts and drew their swords.

The next moment they were upon the redcoats.

They struck with the resistless force of an avalanche.

The horses of the "Liberty Boys" had been trained for such work as this.

They understood what was expected of them.

A slight pull on the reins, just as they reached the enemy, caused the horses to rear up on their hind legs.

Then the intelligent animals threw themselves against the horses of the redcoats, with terrible force, literally knocking them flat upon the ground.

In many instances the riders were pinioned underneath the fallen bodies of the horses.

In other instances the riders were hurled many feet and stricken senseless by the fall.

Then the "Liberty Boys" went to work.

The bright blades of the swords flashed as the youths cut and slashed.

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!" cried Dick.

A wild cheer went up from the "Liberty Boys," and then they repeated Dick's words, in a ringing chorus:

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!"

At this instant Dick caught sight of Arnold, and made a dash toward him.

"Death to traitors!" he cried.

Before Dick could reach Arnold, however, two or three of the redcoats got between, and again Dick was foiled in his attempt to engage in combat with the leader of the redcoats.

The British dragoons were badly demoralized.

It was the first time that they had encountered the "Liberty Boys."

Many of them were veterans.

They had taken part in many a hard-fought battle.

They had fought on many a field, in Europe as well as in America.

They had encountered forces made up of brave men, men who made fighting a business, and who knew not the meaning of the word "Fear."

But in all their experience they had never encountered any such dare-devil, reckless fighters as were these "Liberty Boys."

It was a revelation to them.

They would not have believed it possible that such terrible fellows could exist in a country that had had so little advantages in the way of military teachings.

The "Liberty Boys," however, had needed nothing of this kind.

They had needed no instruction.

They were natural fighters.

They had studied the matter for themselves, and had quickly learned all that was necessary.

They had learned that fierceness of attack, coupled with bulldog-like determination, would overcome superiority of force in most instances.

It was so in this instance.

Superiority of numbers did not seem to help the British in the least.

The attack of the "Liberty Boys" was irresistible.

In less than one minute's time the redcoats were again in full flight.

Dick decided to let them go.

Several of the "Liberty Boys" had gone down, two or three having been killed and the others wounded, and Dick did not wish to go on and leave them.

He and his men dismounted and looked after the wounded "Liberty Boys."

Three or four were not so badly wounded but that they would be able to take to the saddle again, but two were quite severely wounded.

These were carried to a farmhouse a quarter of a mile distant.

It happened that the people were patriots, and they said they would be glad to take care of the two wounded "Liberty Boys."

The patriot farmer was delighted when he learned that a force of the British had been defeated and put to flight.

"Them red-coated scoundrels hev been carryin' things with too high a hand," the farmer said. "I'm mighty glad they got licked for once."

"They'll get licked more than once!" said Bob, grimly.

"I hope so," the farmer said.

"We certainly shall do our best to put a stop to their high-handed doings," said Dick.

Then he asked the farmer if there was a spade about the place.

The farmer said there was, and sent his ten-year-old boy to get it.

Dick sent some of the "Liberty Boys" back to where the encounter with the redcoats had taken place, and instructed them to bury the dead.

When the "Liberty Boys" returned, they told Dick that the wounded redcoats were suffering terribly.

Dick had expected that the redcoats would return and look after their wounded, but they had not done so, and it looked now as if they did not intend to do so.

Dick was good-hearted and humane.

He told the farmer to hitch a couple of horses to a wagon, which stood near, and when this had been done, he sent Bob and some more of the "Liberty Boys" to bring the wounded redcoats to the farmhouse.

This was done.

It took two trips with the wagon, as there were fourteen of the wounded redcoats, and only seven could be brought at one time.

It happened that the farmhouse was one of those old-fashioned, mansion-like affairs, with three times the number of rooms needed.

There were numerous rooms that were not in use.

A couple of these rooms were utilized, the redcoats being placed in there on blankets spread on the floor.

The farmer, as was the case in those days, had a medicine-chest which was well filled with medicines, liniments, salves, etc.

Dick, Bob and a number of the "Liberty Boys" had had sufficient experience, so that they were quite skillful in dressing wounds, and they attended to the wounds of the wounded redcoats at once.

By the time all this had been accomplished the sun was low down in the West.

Evening was coming on.

Dick decided to remain where they were, over night.

The farmer was eager to have him do so.

He said he had food in plenty for the youths, and feed for the horses.

So Dick said he would stay.

The farmer owned quite a large plantation.

He also owned quite a number of slaves.

He called in a number of the negro women and put them to work cooking.

In an hour's time, sufficient good, wholesome food had been cooked to satisfy the hunger of Dick and all his men.

They ate heartily, for they were hungry.

They were young, strong and healthy, and were naturally possessed of good appetites.

Then, too, the work they had done in putting the redcoats to rout had added to their hunger.

"Do you think the redcoats will return and attack us to-night, Dick?" asked Bob, when supper was over.

"Hard telling, Bob."

"I rather think they will do so."

"Well, we will go on the theory that they are liable to do so, and will put out sentinels."

"That is a good idea, Dick; we don't want to be taken by surprise."

"No, indeed."

There was plenty of room in the farmhouse for all of the "Liberty Boys."

As soon as it grew dark, Dick stationed the sentinels.

He instructed them to keep close watch.

"The redcoats may return and attack us," he said; "if so, we wish to know it before they have time to accomplish anything."

"They won't be able to surprise you, Dick," one of the sentinels said. "We will see them, if they put in an appearance."

Dick felt safe on this score.

The "Liberty Boys" dispersed to their rooms at about nine o'clock, and soon all were asleep.

They slept soundly until about one o'clock, when they were awakened by a sound of firearms being discharged.

Dick was upon his feet in an instant.

"The redcoats are at hand!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER IV.

A CHECK TO ARNOLD.

Dick hastened to arouse all the "Liberty Boys."

The majority of them had been awakened by the firing, however, so it was not much of a task.

Dick hastened to the front door and opened it.

One of the sentinels was there.

"They're coming, Dick!" he exclaimed. "There seems to be a big gang of them, too."

"Do you think there are more of them than were in the party we had our fight with yesterday?"

"Yes, Dick; I should judge that there are at least twice as many."

At this instant the other sentinels came running up.

"They have surrounded the place, Dick!" one cried. "They don't intend that we shall get away."

"That is all right," said Dick, quietly. "We don't want to get away. This is a good, strong building, and I think we can fight them off."

"We can try, anyway," said one of the sentinels.

"Come inside, boys," said Dick.

All entered the house.

Dick closed the door and locked and bolted it.

Then he led the way upstairs to where most of the "Liberty Boys" were.

The upstairs consisted, in the main, of bedrooms.

There was a wide hall running the length of the building, with rooms on both sides.

The "Liberty Boys" had taken possession of these rooms.

In each room was a window.

The "Liberty Boys" had raised the windows and were peering out in an effort to get sight of the redcoats.

Dick went from room to room, giving the youths instructions.

"We will fight to the death, if need be, boys!" he said.

"We will not surrender, no matter how greatly we may be outnumbered."

This was the sentiment the boys liked to hear expressed.

The word "surrender" was not in their vocabulary.

Watching out of the windows, the "Liberty Boys" presently saw dark forms moving here and there.

These were the redcoats, they were confident.

Some of the "Liberty Boys" were just on the point of firing at the dark figures when there came a thunderous rapping upon the front door.

The hallway extended from the front to the rear.

At each end of the hallway was a window.

The window at the front end of the hallway was right over the front door.

Dick made his way to this window.

He carefully raised the window.

He leaned out and looked down.

Almost below Dick stood a man.

"What is wanted?" Dick asked.

It was quite dark, but Dick could see that the man turned his head and looked upward.

"Who are you?" the man asked, in return.

"My name is Slater, Dick Slater, at your service."

"Humph! Are you the commander of the rebel force inside this house?"

"I am the commander of the patriot force in here. And, now, who are you?"

"I represent Benedict Arnold, commander of the British force."

"Oh, you do?"

"I do."

"You are representing a traitor and a sneak, my friend."

"That is as may be. I did not come here to discuss that."

"Oh, you didn't?"

"No."

"Why did you come here, then?"

"To demand the surrender of yourself and men."

"Oh, that is what you came for?"

Dick's tone was sarcastic.

"That is what I came for."

Dick laughed, ironically.

"Then you may as well go back at once."

"You refuse to surrender?"

"I do."

Dick's tone was quiet, but determined.

The redcoat was evidently disappointed.

"You'll be sorry!" he declared.

"I don't think so."

"You had better reconsider the matter."

"I have nothing to reconsider."

Dick's tone was sufficient to convince the redcoat that he meant every word he uttered.

"Do you know what will happen if you try to resist?"

"Can't say that I do. What will happen?"

"You will all be killed."

"You'll have to get at us first."

"Oh, we'll get at you, all right!" the fellow declared.

"How?"

"We'll break the doors down, smash in the windows and get in that way."

"But won't we be doing something during that time?"

"What will you be doing?"

"Shooting you down!"

"Oh, but there's too many of us; you can't do much, that way."

"How many are there of you?"

"Four hundred."

"That isn't many."

Dick spoke in the most cool and unconcerned manner imaginable.

"You think not?"

"That is what I think."

"Well, you will find it will be too many for you and your gang of rebels. You had better make up your minds to surrender."

"Never!" replied Dick. "We would die before we would surrender. If you want us, you will have to come and take us."

"Very well. We can and will do it."

"You may think so."

"I know so."

"You just think you know. You'll find your mistake when you make the attempt."

"You will see."

"So will you see. You will find it to be about the biggest task you ever undertook."

"Then you absolutely refuse to surrender?"

"I absolutely refuse. You may return to your commander and so inform him."

The man turned and walked away.

He had gone but a few steps when he paused.

"Have you thought," he called out, "of the fact that if we should fail to effect an entrance, we can burn the house down?"

"You would not do that," said Dick.

"Why not?"

"For the best reason in the world."

"Tell me the reason."

"I shall be only too glad to do so. There are within this house at this moment, fourteen of your comrades who were wounded in the engagement yesterday. If you were to set fire to the house you would consign them to the most horrible death imaginable, and I do not think that, cruel-hearted as you have proved yourselves to be, you would do that."

"Are you telling the truth?" the fellow asked.

"I am telling you the truth, and nothing but the truth. So I don't think you will set the house on fire to-night."

The fellow turned and walked away.

"There will be lively work here in a few minutes, Dick," said Bob, who had approached while Dick was talking.

"You're right, Bob. If that fellow told the truth, there are four hundred of the redcoats, and that number ought to be able to make it lively enough for us."

"That's right."

Dick made the rounds of the rooms and told the "Liberty Boys" what he had learned.

He gave them instructions with regard to how to conduct the defense.

As there was but one window in each room, not more than two could fire through the window, handily.

Dick told them to station two at each window to do the shooting, while the others kept back from the windows and reloaded the pistols as fast as they were emptied.

In this way a constant fire could be kept up.

When Dick had made the rounds and given his instructions, he returned to the window at the front.

All waited patiently for the attack.

Their patience was not tried very severely.

They did not have long to wait.
 Suddenly there was a rush of dark forms.
 They darted into view from the outer darkness, and came rushing straight toward the house.
 They came from all sides at once.
 The dark forms were those of the redcoats.
 They were advancing to the attack.
 The "Liberty Boys" could not see the redcoats very plainly, but it was plain enough for their purpose.
 They were skilled at shooting in the darkness.
 Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!
 Crash! Roar!
 The fight was on.
 The "Liberty Boys" fired rapidly.
 There were two at every window, who had nothing else to do but fire, and they kept it up constantly.
 As fast as they fired the pistols the "Liberty Boys" passed them back to be reloaded by their comrades.
 The redcoats fired up at the windows, as they advanced, but their bullets did little execution.
 The shots from the "Liberty Boys' " pistols, however, did considerable execution.
 Many of the redcoats went down.
 They had not looked for such strong resistance.
 Many of the redcoats fled back into the encompassing darkness.
 The fire from within the house was too severe.
 Some of the redcoats kept on and reached the house.
 Even then they were not safe, however.
 The "Liberty Boys" leaned out of the windows and fired straight down at their enemies.
 Many of the redcoats were killed.
 Many were severely wounded.
 The fire was so galling that they were unable to remain.
 They broke and fled back into the darkness, followed by a rain of bullets.
 Dick was well pleased.
 His "Liberty Boys" had succeeded in repulsing a force at least three times greater than their own.
 Dick was encouraged, also.
 He believed they would be enabled to hold the redcoats at bay.
 It was half an hour before the redcoats could get up sufficient courage to make another attack.
 They made a fierce and determined attack this time, but were no more successful than they had been the first time.
 They were repulsed and driven back, with considerable loss.

A number of the "Liberty Boys" were wounded, but fortunately none were killed.

That ended it.

The redcoats made no further attack that night.

When morning came they were nowhere to be seen.

They had given up and gone away.

They had taken their wounded with them, but the dead redcoats still lay where they had fallen.

The "Liberty Boys" made a large excavation and placed the dead bodies of the redcoats in it and covered them up.

"Say, Dick, we seem to be holding Arnold in check, all right," said Bob, drily.

"We seem to be doing a bit more than holding him in check, Bob," was Dick's reply. "If we keep on the way we have been doing we will soon have his force severely crippled."

"That's right; we have done well, so far."

And indeed they had.

CHAPTER V.

DICK DECIDES TO VISIT RICHMOND.

"What are you going to do next, Dick?" asked Bob, when all had eaten breakfast.

"I'll tell you, Bob, I've about made up my mind to make this farmhouse our headquarters for the present."

"Ah! Will Mr. Saunders let you do it?"

Saunders was the name of the farmer.

"Yes; I spoke to him about it this morning."

"And he said we could stay here?"

"Yes; he is not only willing, but glad to have us stay."

"Why so?"

"Why, you see, Arnold has been burning and pillaging everywhere around this vicinity, and Mr. Saunders has been living in constant fear of a visit from the redcoats."

"I see. He thinks that if we are here we will be a protection to him and his property, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess he is right about that. We demonstrated that, last night."

"So we did."

The "Liberty Boys" were well pleased when they were told that Dick intended to make this farmhouse his headquarters.

As soon as they could get their horses bridled and saddled the "Liberty Boys" mounted and rode away.

They scoured the country around in search of redcoats.

They did not run across any of the redcoats before noon, so they rode back to the farmhouse for dinner.

After dinner they mounted and started out again.

They rode hither and thither till about the middle of the afternoon.

Then, as they emerged from a strip of timber through which they had been riding, they suddenly came upon nearly a hundred horses, which were tied to the fence by the roadside.

"Great guns! we've struck something now, Dick!" exclaimed Bob.

"These are redcoats' horses, sure!" declared Mark Morrison.

"But where are the redcoats?" asked Bob.

Dick had been looking all around.

"I see them!" he exclaimed.

"Where are they?" cried Bob.

Dick pointed toward a house standing more than a quarter of a mile distant, over in a field.

"The redcoats are there," he said.

"You're right," said Mark Morrison. "I see some of them."

"So do I."

"And I!"

"They're up to their old tricks!"

"Yes, they're robbing and plundering that house!"

Such were a few of the exclamations from the "Liberty Boys."

"What are you going to do, Dick?" asked Bob.

"We will go after them, Bob."

"Good!"

"The first thing we will do will be to dismount and tie our horses."

Then Dick gave the order, calling out loud enough so that all could hear him.

The "Liberty Boys" leaped to the ground instantly.

They led their horses to the fence and tied them.

The fence was made of rails.

The rails were heavy, so that it was safe to tie to them.

On the opposite side of the road was another fence.

It was not made of rails.

It was made of stone.

It was about five feet high.

About halfway between the road and the house over in the field was another stone fence.

"Follow me, 'Liberty Boys!'" cried Dick. "Forward!"

He ran across the road and leaped over the stone fence.

The "Liberty Boys" followed.

As they did so quite a commotion was noticed in the vicinity of the house.

Redcoats were seen coming out of the house, like bees out of a hive.

"They have seen us!" exclaimed Bob.

"So they have," agreed Dick. "Forward!"

He led the way across the field.

He went on the run.

The "Liberty Boys" followed.

The redcoats came running toward the "Liberty Boys," from the direction of the house.

Dick saw what the redcoats were trying to do.

They wished to reach the stone wall first, and shelter themselves behind it.

He thought they might be able to succeed, as they had not so far to run as had the "Liberty Boys."

"That's all right," thought Dick, "let them take refuge behind the wall, if they want to; we will get them out!"

He ran as rapidly as he could, and his men kept up as well as they were able.

Only a few of them were as fast runners as was Dick, however.

Bob, Mark and a few others kept close behind Dick, but the others were strung out.

The redcoats succeeded in reaching the stone fence first.

A number leaped up on top of the fence and lifted their muskets to take aim.

Dick paused, as did Bob, Mark and those nearest, and they drew their pistols and fired before the redcoats could fire.

Two of the redcoats dropped off the fence to the ground.

The aim of the others was disturbed so that, although they fired, the bullets went wild.

"Come on!" cried Dick, in a ringing voice. "Come on, and we will teach Arnold how the 'Liberty Boys' treat traitors!"

The youths had paused to fire their pistols, and now they rushed forward again at full speed.

The entire force of "Liberty Boys" had caught up with Dick, now, and all rushed forward together.

Soon the "Liberty Boys" were on one side of the fence, while the redcoats were on the other.

It became a battle at close quarters to see which force should retain possession of the fence.

It was a fierce fight.

The redcoats were veterans.

Up to the present time they had flattered themselves that they would be a match for any force the Americans could send against them, even though the force might outnumber them two to one.

But this encounter with the "Liberty Boys" was destined to soon disabuse them of this idea.

The redcoats had never encountered such fighters as these youths proved themselves to be.

After a few minutes of fierce fighting, the "Liberty Boys" leaped up on top of the stone wall.

With pistol in one hand and sword in the other, the youths fired down upon the redcoats and cut and slashed with such terrible energy as to strike terror to their opponents.

The redcoats could not stand it.

They broke and fled at the top of their speed.

After them rushed the "Liberty Boys."

The redcoats ran straight toward the house.

Doubtless the British thought of taking refuge in the house, but, if so, they gave up the idea.

They were so closely pressed by their pursuers that they did not dare pause.

So they kept right on running.

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" pursued the fleeing redcoats some little distance beyond the house.

Then they discontinued the pursuit and returned to the house.

The redcoats had not succeeded in getting away with any plunder, owing to the fact that the "Liberty Boys" had put in an appearance before they had had time to do so.

The farmer realized that the youths had saved the property, and he was profuse in his thanks.

When Dick told the farmer that he had killed several of the redcoats and asked him if he would bury them, the farmer said he would.

"I wish as how ye hed killed all uv 'em," he said. "Them fellers hev been hevin' things all their own way aroun' heer fur quite a spell."

"Well, I don't think they'll have their own way while we are around," said Dick, quietly. "At any rate, they won't have it all their own way."

"I sh'uld say not, jedging by what I hev jest seen," the farmer said, drily.

Two of the "Liberty Boys" had been killed.

Five were wounded, but, fortunately, not seriously.

Dick and his comrades attended to the burying of the two "Liberty Boys," but left the burial of the dead redcoats entirely to the farmer.

The youths returned to the road and took charge of the horses.

They took possession of the redcoats' horses as well as of their own.

"To the victors belong the spoils" is the rule of war most universally observed.

Dick was well aware of the fact that to deprive the redcoats of their horses was to deprive them of the means

of getting about the country, quickly and easily, and that it would make it more difficult for them to do their work of pillaging and plundering.

It was a rule with Dick to do all he could to injure his enemies, and make it hard for them to carry out their plans.

It was not because he was cruel-hearted or vindictive, but because it was in strict accordance with the idea of war.

Dick decided to remain in the vicinity until evening.

He thought it possible that the redcoats might return and try to complete their work of pillaging and plundering the house.

The farmer was delighted when Dick told him that he would remain.

He thanked the youth, with great energy.

"Thar's no tellin' what them fellers might do if they sh'uld come back and find me helpless," he said.

"They would undoubtedly take everything that suited their fancy, and then burn the house down," said Bob.

"Thet's jest about what they'd do," the farmer said.

The horses were led through the field and tied near the house.

The youths spent the rest of the afternoon there.

The redcoats did not again put in an appearance.

The trouncing they had received had evidently taught them a lesson.

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" remained there for supper.

The farmer had put his negro servants to work and they had gotten up a big supper.

The youths enjoyed it immensely.

When they had eaten, they mounted, bade the farmer good-by, and rode away.

Each youth led an extra horse.

These animals might come in handy, Dick knew.

They reached the farmhouse where they had established their headquarters just as darkness was descending over all.

The farmer had plenty of stable room, so the horses were soon placed in a safe place.

When the youths had entered the house, Dick called Bob to one side.

"I am going away to-night, Bob," Dick said, "and I shall leave you in command."

Bob was surprised.

"Going away?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Where are you going?"

"To Richmond."

"To Richmond?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"I wish to learn whether or not Lafayette has reached Virginia."

"Oh, I see! He was to come down the Chesapeake Bay in ships, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"And was he to come to Richmond?"

"Yes; General Washington told me to send some one to Richmond to be on the lookout for Lafayette, but I think I had better go myself."

"Let me go, old man."

Dick shook his head.

"No, I will go."

"You are needed in command of the boys, Dick, while I——"

"You can command the 'Liberty Boys' just as well as I can do it, Bob."

The youth shook his head.

"I don't think so."

"I know it."

Dick talked with Bob a while longer.

Then he went and told the youths that he was going to Richmond, and that Bob would be their commander while he was away.

Then he went out, bridled and saddled his horse, mounted, and rode away.

He had inquired the way to Richmond, and had no fear that he would lose his way.

CHAPTER VI.

LIVELY TIMES.

It was about ten miles to Richmond.

Dick rode at a fairly good pace.

An hour and a half from the time he left the farmhouse he was riding into the outskirts of the city.

Dick had never been in Richmond before.

It was strange to him.

He scarcely knew in which direction to go.

It did not matter, particularly, however.

He would leave his horse at the first livery stable he came to.

Then he would walk about the streets.

If Lafayette and his men had arrived, Dick would soon learn the fact.

Dick was riding quietly down a street, in the residence district, when he heard the clatter of horses' hoofs behind him.

He did not look around.

He thought it was as well to not show curiosity.

He kept his face turned toward the front and rode quietly onward.

Closer and closer came the sound of the hoofbeats.

Dick listened closely.

He decided that there were four or five of the horses.

Soon the horses were close up behind him.

"Out of the way!" cried an imperious voice. "Get out of the way, you fool, or we will run over you!"

Dick started.

He believed he recognized the voice.

"That is Arnold, the traitor! I will wager that I am right!" he said to himself.

"Out of the way, I tell you!" again cried the imperious voice.

"It is he! It is Arnold, sure enough!" thought Dick.

Then he turned his horse out to the side and let the horsemen—of whom there were four—ride past.

As the men passed, Dick drew his horse in behind them.

The youth made up his mind to follow the horsemen and see where they went.

He followed them down into the main part of the city.

Presently the four drew rein in front of a tavern.

They leaped down.

A hostler came running out and took the horses around behind the building.

Arnold and his three companions entered the tavern.

Dick had drawn rein a hundred yards distant up the street.

He waited till the four men had entered the building.

Then he rode on down, and paused in front of the tavern.

He glanced up at the front of the building.

By the light of a street lamp, which stood in front, he read the name of the tavern on a board nailed above the door.

It was "The King's Arms."

"That is a Tory tavern sure," thought Dick. "Well, I think I shall have to patronize it, much as I am opposed to fostering the king's cause in any way."

Dick leaped to the ground.

He waited till the hostler came, and then he turned his horse over to the fellow.

Dick then entered the tavern, boldly.

Dick wore a suit of citizen's clothing.

He wore a slouch hat which he pulled down over his face.

He did not think there was much danger that Arnold would recognize him.

As Dick entered the barroom of the tavern he gave a quick glance around the room.

Arnold and his three companions were standing at the bar.

They had just ordered some wine.

As they were drinking it Dick walked across the floor and took a seat at the farther side of the room.

When Arnold and his companions had finished drinking, they left the barroom.

They passed through a doorway, within a few feet of where Dick sat.

Dick listened, intently.

He heard the sound of their footsteps quite plainly.

He knew from the sound that the men were going up-stairs.

Dick was eager to follow.

He thought that by playing the spy he might be able to learn something of value.

Dick wondered if he dared try to follow them.

He decided to try to make the attempt, at any rate.

He made up his mind that the boldest plan was the best one.

Rising, he walked quickly through the doorway.

He acted just as if he had a right to do so.

Dick more than half expected to be called back, but no one spoke to him.

He found himself in a wide hallway.

A flight of stairs led upward.

Dick made his way up these stairs, promptly and unhesitatingly.

At the top of the stairs was another hallway.

It led back toward the rear of the building.

Dick walked slowly back along the hallway.

He paused and listened at every door he came to.

He did not hear voices in any of the rooms until he reached the one farthest back, on the left-hand side.

When he paused at this door he heard voices.

He was sure that Arnold and the three men were in the room.

Dick bent over, with the intention of looking through the keyhole.

As he did so the door suddenly opened.

One of the men had opened the door, with the intention of leaving the room.

He was taken by surprise.

So was Dick.

The redcoats uttered cries of amazement.

"A spy!" cried Arnold. "Seize him!"

Dick was vexed.

He had expected to overhear a conversation between the men.

Now that idea would have to be given up.

He would have to look out for himself.

The men were four to his one.

As Arnold gave the command, the man who had opened the door leaped forward and seized Dick.

Dick made a backward leap, but was too late.

The youth struck the redcoat a blow on the jaw.

The fellow released his hold and sank to the floor.

Before Dick could leap away, Arnold and his two companions were upon the youth.

They seized hold of him.

Then a furious struggle began.

The odds were against Dick.

But it was not the first time he had encountered such odds.

He had no thought of giving up.

In such contests as this Dick was equal to two or three ordinary men.

He fought desperately.

He struck out straight from the shoulder.

He landed some telling blows.

The redcoats were unaccustomed to hand-to-hand struggles such as this.

They did not know how to make the most of their numerical superiority.

They got in each other's way.

They struck each other in their attempts to strike Dick, on more than one occasion.

But Dick usually hit what he aimed at.

The result was that he presently beat the two redcoats to the floor, in almost a senseless condition.

Arnold then ceased attacking Dick.

He leaped back into the room and closed the door and bolted it.

Dick knew that the men would remain unconscious but a few moments.

They would soon be up again, ready to renew the conflict.

He must get away before this happened.

He made his way along the hall as rapidly as possible.

When he reached the head of the stairs he met the tavern-keeper and two or three other men.

"What's the trouble?" asked the tavern-keeper. "What was making all that noise?"

"One of the men who came in here with Arnold a little while ago had a fit," replied Dick, calmly. "He's all right now."

"Oh, that was it, eh?"

There was relief in the landlord's tone.

Dick walked coolly on down the stairs.

The tavern-keeper and the other men turned around and followed Dick.

As Dick entered the barroom half a dozen British soldiers entered the front door.

As the eyes of the leading redcoat fell upon Dick the fellow gave utterance to an exclamation.

"Dick Slater, the rebel spy!" he cried.

Dick was amazed.

He did not remember having ever seen the redcoat before.

That the redcoat had seen him before, however, was evident.

He could not have recognized Dick otherwise.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish.

Dick hardly knew what to do.

There were at least a dozen men in the barroom, and no doubt all were Tories or Tory sympathizers.

The landlord and the men with him were behind Dick, while in front of him were the half dozen redcoats.

Dick was practically surrounded.

How was he to escape?

He was in a tight place; of this there was no doubt.

But Dick was far from thinking of giving up.

He would not allow himself to be captured, if he could help it.

The redcoat who had called Dick by name drew a pistol and leveled it at Dick's head.

"Surrender, you rebel spy!" he cried. "Up with your hands!"

The men who were in the barroom leaped to their feet.

They gave utterance to cries of surprise and consternation.

"Dick Slater!"

"The rebel spy!"

"Shoot him!"

"Kill him!"

"Don't let him get away!"

Such were a few of the exclamations given utterance to.

Dick stood perfectly still.

He did not flinch before the leveled pistol of the redcoat.

Dick's body was motionless, but his mind was very active.

He was trying to think of some way to escape.

He realized that if he escaped he would have to do so quickly.

The landlord and the men who had followed him downstairs were already almost at his back.

The men who were in barroom were ready to leap upon him.

There was no time to lose.

He must act quickly.

Dick had practiced handling his pistols until he was very expert.

With a quick movement he drew one of his pistols, brought it to a level and fired.

He fired at the redcoat who held the pistol.

Dick's move was so quickly executed that the redcoat did not have time to even pull the trigger.

The bullet from Dick's pistol struck the redcoat in the right shoulder.

The shock caused him to drop his pistol.

He gave utterance to a wild cry of pain.

"I'm killed! Oh, I'm a dead man!" he cried. "The cursed rebel has done for me! Kill him, boys!"

But Dick did not wait to be killed.

He acted instantly.

He leaped forward.

As he did so he reversed the pistol in his hand.

In an instant he was among the redcoats.

He dealt fierce blows with the heavy butt of the pistol.

It was an effective weapon.

Every time the butt of the pistol struck a redcoat's head the redcoat went down.

Dick scattered the fellows, quickly.

He soon had a way cleared.

None too soon, however.

The tavern-keeper and the other men who were in the barroom had leaped forward in pursuit of Dick and were almost upon him.

As Dick leaped toward the door, they grabbed at him.

They barely missed getting hold of him.

Had they done so, Dick would have been helpless.

They would have outnumbered him so greatly that he could not have hoped to get free.

But they did not get hold of him, and he reached the door.

Jerking it open, he leaped through the doorway.

He darted down the street, but instead of continuing straight onward he leaped around the corner of the tavern and made his way back to the stable at the rear.

"I will take my horse, if you please," he said to the hostler. "I have decided to not remain in the city tonight, after all."

The hostler led Dick's horse out, after bridling and saddling him.

Dick mounted and rode calmly out of the yard and away, up the street.

CHAPTER VII.

ARNOLD HEARS PLEASING NEWS.

Dick had no intention of leaving Richmond.

He had told the hostler he was going to leave, simply as an excuse so that he could get his horse.

Dick did not intend to go away until he had learned whether or not General Lafayette and his men had arrived. That was what he had come to Richmond for. He rode down the street until he came to another tavern. He drew rein in front of the tavern and leaped to the ground.

A hostler came out and led the horse away.

Dick entered the tavern.

He engaged a room for the night.

Then he went out upon the street.

A thought struck him, however, and he re-entered the tavern.

He approached the man behind the bar.

"What is the news in Richmond?" he asked.

"There's nothing new that I know of," was the reply.

"What'll ye have to drink?"

"Nothing," replied Dick.

He waited until the bartender had served two or three customers, and then said:

"I heard that General Lafayette, with quite an army of patriot soldiers, had reached Richmond. Do you know whether or not it is true?"

The barkeeper looked at Dick rather searchingly.

"Let's see, Lafayette's that frog-eating Frenchman, ain't he?"

"I don't know about the frog-eating part of it," replied Dick; "he's a Frenchman, however."

"An' he's over here fightin' with the rebels, eh?"

Dick saw that the barkeeper was in sympathy with the British.

"Yes, he's fighting with the rebels, and I heard that he was now in Richmond."

Dick had heard nothing of the kind, of course.

He was simply trying to find out whether or not Lafayette had reached the city.

"Well, that's the first I've heard of it," the barkeeper declared. "What would he be comin' down here for?"

"To hold Arnold in check."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes; at least, so I have been informed."

"Humph! I guess he'll have a pretty big job on his hands when he tackles Arnold. That feller's a fighter."

"So he is," agreed Dick.

Realizing that he could learn nothing here, Dick left the tavern.

He walked slowly up the street.

There were many people on the streets.

Occasionally two or three British soldiers were to be seen.

Dick made it a point to listen to as much of the talk of the people as possible.

He thought that it was possible he might overhear something regarding Lafayette.

But in this he was disappointed.

He walked up and down the street for an hour or more, but not a word did he hear regarding Lafayette and his men.

Dick was somewhat disappointed.

He had hoped to find that Lafayette was in Richmond.

Dick and his "Liberty Boys" had succeeded in holding Arnold in check since they had reached the vicinity of Richmond, but it would undoubtedly be a big contract for them to do so very long, unaided.

Dick hardly knew what to do.

Should he return to where he had left the "Liberty Boys," or should he remain in Richmond?

Lafayette might reach Richmond that night or the next day.

It was Dick's desire to see Lafayette as soon as he arrived.

So the youth decided to remain in Richmond that night and next day.

"Bob and the 'Liberty Boys' will get along all right without me," he thought. "Yes, I will remain."

Dick made his way back to the tavern.

Entering, he got the key to his room and went upstairs.

As he went through the barroom a man, who was sitting at one of the small tables, gave a start.

When Dick had disappeared this man rose and walked over to the bar.

"Did you see that fellow who went through here just now?" he asked the barkeeper.

"Yes, I saw him," was the reply.

"Do you know who he is?"

"No; an' I don't care."

"You don't?"

"No."

"You would if you knew who he was."

"Think so?"

"I know so."

"You do, eh?"

"Yes."

The barkeeper looked interested.

"Who in blazes is the fellow?" he asked.

"Who is he?"

"Yes."

"He is some one you have heard of."

"He is?"

"Yes; his name is well known throughout the country. He has made his name famous during the past five years."

"Famous?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"As a spy."

"As a spy?"

The barkeeper was surprised.

"Yes, as a spy."

"A British spy, I suppose?"

"No."

"No?"

"Not a bit of it. He is a rebel spy!"

"A rebel spy, eh?"

The barkeeper stared in amazement.

"Yes, a rebel spy. He is the king spy of 'em all, too!"

"So you have intimated. What's the fellow's name?"

"Dick Slater!"

"What!"

The barkeeper almost shouted the word.

"You don't mean it!" he finally gasped. "Surely that young fellow cannot be Dick Slater, the famous rebel spy!"

"He just is. You know he has been called the 'boy spy.'"

"That's so; I remember, now. But how did you know who he is?"

"I saw him once before to-night, over in the 'King's Arms.'"

"But how did you know who he was?"

"There was a British soldier there who had known the young fellow in years past."

"Oh, that is how you knew him?"

"Yes."

The barkeeper was silent for a few moments.

He seemed to be thinking.

"Say," he said, presently, "Arnold has his headquarters here in Richmond, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where he stays?"

"I do."

"Where?"

"At the King's Arms."

"Do you suppose he is there now?"

"I shouldn't wonder; he was, an hour ago."

"He was?"

"Yes. And what do you think: This rebel spy, Dick Slater, was caught trying to spy on Arnold."

"He was?"

"Yes; he was caught listening at the keyhole of the door opening into a room in which were Arnold and three of his officers."

"But he got away from them, after all?"

"Yes."

"I don't see how he did it. There were four of them, you say?"

"Yes."

"How did he manage to get away from them, then?"

"By fighting."

"He is a fighter, then?"

"He is that. He's a terrible fighter."

"You don't mean to say he was too much for four of them?"

"I do. He knocked three of them senseless, and Arnold only escaped the same fate by getting back into the room and closing the door."

"Great guns! He must be a fighter."

"He is. He proved it again, down in the barroom. Six British soldiers came in just as he entered the barroom from upstairs, where he had been engaged in the fight with Arnold and his men, and these soldiers tried to stop him. One of them recognized him as Dick Slater, and, covering him with a pistol, ordered him to surrender."

"And he refused to do so?" asked the barkeeper, who had listened with great interest.

"I should say he did refuse to do so. He drew a pistol so quick you could hardly see how he did it, and shot the soldier down before he could pull the trigger."

"Then he leaped forward and knocked the other soldiers right and left with the butt of the pistol and got away. Oh, he's a terror!"

"He must be."

The barkeeper was silent a few moments, and then he looked up.

"Say," he said, "I guess Arnold would be glad to lay hands on the fellow, wouldn't he?"

"I judge that he would."

"Well, what's to hinder him?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I don't see that there is anything to hinder him. That young feller has engaged a room for the night. He has gone to his room, so there is no doubt that he is going to stay. Why can't we communicate with Arnold and capture the spy?"

"I see no reason why we can't do so."

"There isn't any reason. It will be easy enough."

The other shook his head.

"I don't know about it being so easy," he said, somewhat doubtfully; "it is possible, however."

"Oh, there won't be any trouble about it."

The other was not so sure about it, but he was quite willing to enter into the affair.

He was a strong Tory, and, of course, would be glad to aid in the capture of such a famous person as Dick.

He agreed to go to the King's Arms tavern and see Arnold and tell him of Dick's presence in the city and of his whereabouts.

He left the tavern and made his way to the King's Arms.

He sent word up to Arnold's room that he wished an interview.

Arnold sent back word, asking what the man's business was.

The fellow sent back word to Arnold that it referred to Dick Slater, the rebel spy.

This must have aroused Arnold's interest, for he sent word for the man to come up to his room.

The man went upstairs to Arnold's room at once.

Arnold greeted him, eagerly.

"Well," he remarked, "you wished to see me?"

"Yes."

"You said you had something to tell me regarding Dick Slater, the rebel spy?"

"I have."

"What is it?"

"I wished to tell you that he is still in Richmond."

"Ah! How do you know that?"

"I have just seen him."

"You have just seen him?"

Arnold's tone was eager.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At the 'Southern Star' tavern, up the street a ways."

"You saw him there?"

"Yes."

"And only a short time ago?"

"Not ten minutes since."

Arnold's face lighted up.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Then I shall be able to capture him—that is, if he has put up there for the night."

He looked at the man, inquiringly.

"That is just what he has done," the man said. "He hired a room for the night, and went to his room as if to go to bed."

"That is good news!" Arnold said. "I shall have him a prisoner in my hands before morning, and he will be a most important prisoner, too, I assure you!"

"I know," the man said; "he is a famous spy and scout."

"Yes, and a daring and dangerous fighter, also. He is the captain of a company of young fellows like himself; they are regular dare-devils, but they fight much more fiercely when he is in command than at any other time. They are out in the country, not far from Richmond, and

if I can capture Dick Slater I will be able to give the 'Liberty Boys,' as they are called, a good trouncing."

"I'm glad I was able to give you this information," the man said.

"And so am I," said Arnold. "If I really succeed in capturing Dick Slater, you shall be rewarded."

CHAPTER VIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Dick did not know that he had been recognized when he entered the tavern.

He went up to the room, feeling perfectly safe.

He did not apprehend danger from any source.

He locked the door and went to bed.

He thought he might as well get a good night's rest as not.

He was soon asleep.

How long he slept he did not, of course, know.

It may have been, and doubtless was, two or three hours.

Then he suddenly awoke.

What had awakened him?

Dick asked himself this question.

He was sure something had done so.

He felt confident that he would not have awakened without cause.

He listened, intently.

Dick had keen hearing.

The youth was confident he heard the sound of whispering.

He thought that he heard the sound of shuffling feet, also.

The sounds seemed to come from the hall outside the door.

Dick's suspicions were aroused.

What could it mean?

Who could be out there?

Somehow Dick suspected that it meant danger for him.

He was impressed with the idea that the people in the hall were not friends of his.

They were more likely to be enemies.

Dick got softly out of bed.

He quickly donned his clothing.

Then he stole across to the door.

It was dark, of course, and he had to feel his way.

When he reached the door he bent over and applied his ear to the keyhole.

He listened, intently.

He tried his best to understand some of the whispered conversation.

He could not understand enough to enable him to know what was in the wind, but he was confident that he heard his own name mentioned.

If he was right in this, and he was sure he was, it of itself was sufficient to cause him alarm.

It proved that some one had recognized him when he entered the tavern.

His presence there was known.

In that case, the men outside were, undoubtedly, British or Tories, or possibly both.

Probably they were some of Arnold's men.

They could have but one mission there.

That was to capture him.

Dick felt that Arnold would be glad to capture him.

The encounter in the King's Arms tavern, when Dick had been caught spying, had, no doubt, angered Arnold greatly.

Dick felt that he was in considerable danger.

He was determined not to allow himself to be captured, however.

It would be impossible for him to escape by way of the door, but there was a window in the room.

He might escape through it.

Dick made his way across the room to the window.

He tried the window.

It was not fastened.

It went up easily.

Dick fastened it so that it would not fall down.

He heard a noise at the door.

The persons in the hall were trying to get the door open.

Dick realized that he did not have much time to spare.

He leaned through the open window and looked downward.

He could not see the ground it was so dark.

Dick judged that he was looking down upon the alleyway leading from the street to the stable.

At this instant he heard something strike the floor on the other side of the room.

"The door key," thought Dick; "they have pushed it out. Perhaps they have a duplicate. In that case they will have the door open in a few moments. I must get out of here."

Dick did not hesitate longer.

He climbed through the open window.

Holding to the window-sill with his hand, he lowered himself until he hung extended at full length.

Dick felt confident that his feet were not more than five or six feet from the ground.

Such a drop as that ought not to hurt him.

He would cheerfully take the risk, anyway.

At this instant Dick heard the door come open in the room he had just left.

Dick did not wait an instant longer.

Releasing his hold on the window-sill he dropped.

He did not drop far.

His feet could not have been more than five feet from the ground, when he hung extended, and he struck the ground seemingly almost upon the same instant that he let go his hold.

As he struck, he heard the sound of excited voices in the room which he had just vacated.

"They have discovered that I have escaped them," the youth thought. "I must get my horse and get away quickly."

Dick made his way back in the direction of the stable.

He reached the door and knocked upon it.

He had to knock again before he could arouse any one.

Then the door opened.

A drowsy-looking hostler stood there.

He was faintly revealed in the light thrown out by a sputtering candle, which burned in the room back of him.

"Wot is wanted?" the fellow asked, sleepily.

Dick brushed past the fellow and entered the little office-like room, where the hostler slept.

Dick closed the door.

He drew a gold piece from his pocket.

He held it up before the astonished eyes of the hostler.

"Do you see that?" the youth asked.

"Yes, I see et."

"Do you want it?"

The fellow was awake now.

His eyes sparkled, greedily.

"Ye bet I do!"

There was no mistaking his earnestness.

"Very well; get my horse bridled and saddled as quickly as possible, and you shall have the money."

The fellow nodded.

"All right; I'll hev yer hoss reddy fur ye in mighty quick time," he said.

"And, say, hostler!"

"What is it?"

"If anybody comes and knocks on the door here, and asks if you have seen anybody, tell them, no. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I unnerstan'," with a grin. "I'll tell 'em."

"All right."

The hostler hastened back into the stable to saddle and bridle Dick's horse.

Dick sat down to take it easy while waiting. Presently Dick heard the sound of footsteps. "I thought so," he said to himself. "They're coming." Dick stepped out of the office into the barn proper. He called to the hostler, in a cautious tone. The hostler hastened to where Dick stood. "Somebody is coming," Dick whispered. "You go in and throw them off the track. When they ask if you've seen any one, tell them, no." "All right. I'll tell 'em." The hostler went into the little room and closed the door behind him. Dick stepped to the door so that he might hear what was said. He heard a knock on the outer door. "Who's thar?" called out the hostler. "It doesn't matter who we are; we want to know if you've seen any one anywhere around the stable within the last few minutes?" "No, I hain't seen anybody," was the reply. "He must have gone out on the street," Dick heard a voice say. "He is not here, anyway, that is certain." "I guess you're right," said another voice. Then the sound of footsteps came to Dick's ears. "Good!" thought Dick. "I guess I will make my escape, after all." The door opened and the hostler stepped back into the stable proper. "I sent 'em away," he said. "I know you did," replied Dick. "I'm much obliged. Now get my horse ready as quickly as you can." The hostler hastened away. A few minutes later he returned, leading Dick's horse. "Here's your horse," he said. "He's all ready fur ye." "Good!" said Dick. "Here's your money." He handed the hostler a gold piece. The fellow thanked Dick, profusely. "That's all right; you've earned it. Now do one more thing for me." "Whut do ye want me ter do?" "I am going to mount the horse in here. When I give the word, you slide the door open, quickly. Some of those fellows may be on the watch, outside, and I want to get away in a hurry." "Do ye think any uv them air out there?" The hostler's voice had a frightened tone. "Oh, I hardly think so," replied Dick. "Still, such might be the case and I want to be on the safe side." "Goily!" the hostler said, "if any uv them air out there

and see ye, they'll know I lied to them a little while ergo, an' I'll ketch et."

"Tell them that I slipped in and got my horse myself," suggested Dick. "They cannot prove that this is not true."

"Thet's so; I kin tell 'em that."

There was relief in the fellow's tone.

Dick mounted his horse.

Seating himself firmly in the saddle, he said, in a low, cautious tone:

"Open the door."

The hostler slid the door open at the word.

Dick urged his horse forward.

He rode out of the stable and down the driveway toward the street.

He was soon out upon the street.

Just as he was congratulating himself that he had escaped without being seen, Dick heard a loud voice cry:

"There he is! There's the rebel spy, Dick Slater! After him, boys! Give it to him! Don't let him escape! Shoot him full of holes!"

Dick realized that some of Arnold's men had remained at the front of the tavern, keeping watch for him.

Dick put spurs to his horse.

In an instant he was going down the street at a full gallop.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!

Crash! Roar!

Dick's enemies had fired upon him.

The bullets whistled all around Dick.

One cut through his coat-sleeve, slightly wounding his arm.

A little wound like this did not matter to Dick, however.

He urged his horse forward at a run.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!

The redcoats had fired another volley.

As before, it did no particular damage.

A bullet struck the horse, inflicting a slight flesh wound, and causing the animal to dash forward at a still swifter gait, but none of the bullets struck Dick.

Dick kept on until he was outside the city limits.

Then he brought his horse to a standstill.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself. "Shall I go back into Richmond and remain until to-morrow evening, as I intended, or shall I go on back to the farmhouse where the 'Liberty Boys' are quartered?"

Dick decided to go back to the farmhouse.

He had learned that Lafayette was not in Richmond, and that was sufficient for the present.

So he urged his horse forward once more and rode onward, out into the country.

CHAPTER IX.

A BIG CONTRACT.

"Well, Dick, we have a big contract on our hands in holding Arnold in check."

"That's right, Bob. We have done pretty well so far, though, I think."

"So we have. We have held Arnold in check fully as well as could be expected, when you take into consideration the fact that he has a thousand men to our less than one hundred. We have caused him a lot of trouble, and have put a stop to a good deal of pillaging and burning."

"True, Bob; and if we can only hold him in check till Lafayette gets here everything will be all right."

"Well, we will keep on doing our best."

Four days had elapsed since Dick's visit to Richmond. During those four days the "Liberty Boys" had not been idle.

On the contrary, they had been very busy.

They had scoured the country for miles around.

They had searched here, there and everywhere for Arnold's marauding band of redcoats.

They had encountered several of these bands.

In each instance a fight had resulted.

Whenever the "Liberty Boys" encountered a force of redcoats there was always sure to be a fight.

The only thing that would have prevented it would have been immediate flight on the part of the British.

As the British parties, as a rule, outnumbered the "Liberty Boys," however, they usually stood their ground and offered battle.

The result, so far, had been the defeat of the British in each and every encounter.

The redcoats were beginning to be quite worked up.

They had been handled so roughly that they were very angry.

They were wild for an opportunity to get even with the "Liberty Boys."

Arnold was, perhaps, the maddest man of all.

Up to the time of the advent of the "Liberty Boys" upon the scene, he had been having everything his own way.

Since their arrival in the vicinity of Richmond, however, things had changed.

The "Liberty Boys" had put quite a check upon his operations.

It was evening at the farmhouse when the above conversation took place between Dick and Bob.

They had just returned from a day's campaign.

They had had their supper and were standing out in the yard.

Suddenly Bob started and uttered an exclamation:

"Look yonder, Dick!"

He pointed up the road as he spoke.

Dick looked in the direction indicated.

He saw a large force of redcoats advancing down the road.

The redcoats were all mounted.

It was not a hundred or two, this time, but seven hundred, at least.

"It is Arnold and his entire force!" exclaimed Bob. "He is coming to attack us."

"I guess you're right, Bob. Arnold has probably grown tired of having his small parties chased about and thrashed with such regularity, and has decided to come against us in force."

This was undoubtedly the case.

The affair looked serious.

The "Liberty Boys" had successfully defended themselves against nearly four hundred, on one occasion, since having taken up their headquarters in the farmhouse; could they do so against double that number?

It was doubtful, to say the least.

Dick was determined to make the attempt, however.

The old farmhouse was a very strong and solid building.

It was well calculated to serve the purpose of a fort.

Then, too, the "Liberty Boys" had plenty of arms and ammunition.

They had captured at least a hundred muskets from the redcoats whom they had killed or wounded.

These would come into good play in defending themselves against the redcoats.

Dick did not delay an instant.

He gave rapid orders.

The "Liberty Boys" retreated into the house and barricaded the doors.

They got the muskets out and placed the ammunition in easy reach.

There was one thing that Dick was glad of.

That was the fact that there was a number of wounded redcoats in the house.

This would prevent Arnold from applying the torch to the building.

Cruel-hearted as his acts had recently proved him to be, Arnold would not set fire to the house when it would sign some of his own men to a horrible death.

This would reduce the affair to a straight out assault from the enemy, and a regular defense from Dick and the Liberty Boys."

"They may get the better of us, eventually," said Bob, firmly, "but they will have a time doing it. There will be a lot of dead redcoats before it comes to pass."

"That's right," agreed Mark Morrison. "With seven or eight hundred men they ought to be able to force their way into the house, sooner or later."

"Yes, but we will cause them to lose a lot of men while doing it."

There was no doubt regarding this.

The "Liberty Boys" were desperate fighters.

Another thing: They were all experts with all kinds of firearms.

They were deadshots with muskets, and were deadly in their execution with pistols at short range.

They were always cool and calm in the midst of the most fierce fighting.

They were always careful to take good aim.

They never fired wildly or at random.

Each and every one of the "Liberty Boys" was like the trained telegrapher, who, sitting in a room, surrounded by a score of clicking instruments, is yet able to concentrate his mind upon one instrument to the exclusion of all the rest, easily reading what is transmitted.

Each "Liberty Boy," when engaged in a battle, had trained himself so that he could pick out an enemy, concentrate his attention upon the one man, to the exclusion of the hundreds of others all around him, take deadly aim and send the bullet straight to the mark.

It was this faculty that made the "Liberty Boys" such dangerous opponents.

By the time Dick had got his men stationed in the different rooms upstairs, everything in readiness to repel the attack which he expected would soon be made, the redcoats had advanced to within a short distance of the house, that is to say, within a comparatively short distance.

They were still out of gunshot range.

The redcoats spread out and surrounded the house.

In doing so they were careful to keep out of range.

The experience of the past few days had taught them the wisdom of doing this.

They had become imbued with a feeling of respect for the prowess of the "Liberty Boys."

Dick wondered if the redcoats would attack while yet it was light.

He hoped that they would.

He feared, however, that they would wait till after dark.

When the redcoats had completely surrounded the house, they dismounted.

Men were detailed to lead the horses away and tie them to a fence.

Dick, who was watching the redcoats closely, had recognized Arnold.

He saw the traitor and two or three of his men standing a little apart from the others engaged in earnest conversation.

They were undoubtedly going over the situation and discussing whether it would be better to make an immediate attack or wait until after nightfall.

Dick hoped the impetuous Arnold would decide in favor of the former plan.

Arnold did not so decide.

The truth was, he was not nearly so impetuous as he had been in the old days when fighting for the glorious cause of Liberty.

He had lost his courage with his loss of honor.

He was now a traitor and felt like one.

Dick soon discovered that it had been decided to await the coming of darkness before beginning the attack.

Dick was troubled.

His face was sober.

He called Bob to one side.

"I want to have a little talk with you, Bob," he said.

Bob saw that Dick was worried.

"What is it, Dick?" he asked.

"I'll tell you, Bob. There are at least eight hundred men out there, don't you think?"

Bob nodded.

"At least that many, Dick."

"While we are a little less than one hundred."

"There are ninety-three of us, Dick."

"Ninety-three against eight hundred! That is a bit too great odds for even the "Liberty Boys" to hope to contend against successfully, Bob, don't you think?"

Bob looked thoughtful.

"The odds is great against us, Dick," he said, "but we are strongly fortified."

"True, Bob; but do you think our being fortified will even up matters?"

Bob pondered.

"Well, I don't know," he remarked, somewhat doubtfully. "What do you think about it?"

"I am afraid the odds against us are too great, Bob."

Dick's tone was sober and thoughtful, though decided.

"You are?"

Bob's face fell as he asked the question.

"Yes; of course, we will be able to make a strong re-

sistance. We may be able to fight the redcoats off for hours, but sooner or later they will succeed in effecting an entrance into the building, and then it will all soon be over."

"True, Dick. We would not be able to hold our own in a hand-to-hand encounter."

"No; they outnumber us too greatly."

The youths were silent for a few moments.

Both seemed to be pondering the situation.

Presently Bob spoke:

"What is to be done, Dick?"

Dick gave a little start.

"That is the question, Bob. I was just trying to figure out what is best for us to do."

"We won't surrender, Dick."

Dick shook his head.

"No, we won't surrender, Bob."

"I would rather die fighting!"

"So would I, Bob; and so, I am confident, would all the boys."

"I think so, Dick. Still we don't want to give up our lives if we can help it."

"No, Bob; but how are we going to help it?"

"I don't know, Dick. That is the question."

Dick was silent a few moments, and then he said:

"There is one chance for us."

Bob's face brightened.

"There is a chance for us, Dick!" he exclaimed.

"Just one."

"Tell me what it is, old man."

"It is this: If Lafayette and his men have reached Richmond, if we can get word to him and he can get here with his men in time, we will be saved."

Bob gave a start and uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Say, Dick, that is a lucky thought. Lafayette ought to be in Richmond by this time, sure, for he has had plenty of time to get there."

"So he has, Bob, but the trouble will be to get word to him."

"I'll take it, Dick."

Bob was eager.

"But look, Bob, we are surrounded by the redcoats."

"I don't care, I'll get through them."

This would have sounded like braggadocio from many persons.

Not so from Bob, however.

He was a youth who knew not the meaning of the word "fear," and if anybody could get through the line of redcoats, he would be the person.

Dick was silent for a few moments.

He was thinking, deeply.

"As it is our only hope, Bob," he said, presently, "I am going to give my consent to let you make the attempt."

"Good for you, Dick!" cried Bob, delighted.

"You must wait until after nightfall, though, Bob."

"All right; just as you say. I am ready and willing to go out and ride right through that gang of redcoats now, though, if you should think it advisable to try it."

"No, it is better to wait till after dark. Then you can mount your horse and make a sudden dash for it. You will take the redcoats by surprise and may succeed in getting through."

"All right; I'll wait till after dark."

Dick and Bob talked for quite a while longer, Dick giving his comrade full instructions.

Then they waited, patiently, for the coming of darkness.

As soon as it was dark enough so that his action would be unseen by the redcoats, Bob left the house and stole out to the stable.

He bridled and saddled his horse and led him out of doors.

He led the animal slowly and carefully to the house.

Dick had emerged from the house, and he shook hands with Bob.

"Good-by, old man," he said; "I hope you will succeed in getting through safely."

"Oh, I think I'll make it all right, Dick," replied Bob. "You know the redcoats tore down the fences as they came, and I have a clear way to the road. By making a dash for it, I think I will get through all right."

"I hope so, Bob. Good-by, old fellow."

"Good-by, Dick. If I should happen to fail and get tumbled off my horse, out there in the darkness, and you should succeed in escaping, tell Edith that I did my duty and that I died thinking of her."

"I will do so, Bob."

The voices of both youths trembled, slightly.

Bob was going on a desperate undertaking.

Both realized this very forcibly.

They might never see each other again.

Bob did not wait longer.

The redcoats were liable to begin the attack upon the house at any moment.

Time was precious.

He plunged the spurs into the horse's flanks, and the animal dashed away at full speed.

Dick listened eagerly, yet anxiously.

The clatter of the horse's hoofs sounded like thunder to his trained hearing.

The redcoats could not help hearing the sound.

But would they understand its meaning?

Dick was afraid they would.
 Suddenly the crash of firearms was heard.
 Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!
 The redcoats had fired a volley.
 to Dick's heart thumped violently.
 w, seemed to almost rise up into his throat.
 He could still hear the sound of the clattering hoofbeats.
 Can the horse had not been hit.
 Count what about Bob?
 in as he still on the horse's back?

CHAPTER X.

BOB FINDS LAFAYETTE.

course Dick had no means of knowing whether or
 t of Bob had escaped being hit by the bullets of the red-
 e. alizing that an attack might be made at any moment,
 and re-entered the house and barred the door.
 st as he got upstairs one of the "Liberty Boys" called
 eceem:
 hey're coming, Dick!"
 Bob, ke good aim with the muskets and give it to them,
 they Dick ordered.
 ing though it was quite dark outside, the dark forms of
 dvancing redcoats could be faintly distinguished at
 ance of perhaps twenty paces.
 d ge "Liberty Boys" took careful aim and fired.
 d yosh! Roar!
 duty yells went up from the redcoats.
 volley had done considerable execution.
 he fight was on.
 k realized that the situation was a grave one.
 ob had succeeded in getting through the line of
 coats, if he should find Lafayette at Richmond when
 ed there, and if he and his "Liberty Boys" could
 he redcoats off till Lafayette and his men came to
 on the relief, Dick felt that all would be well.
 re were three large "ifs" there, however.
 ight fail to get safely through the British lines;
 and the might not be in Richmond.
 at case, of course, they would not be able to reach
 house in time to save Dick and his "Liberty Boys."
 thunde the fight is raging between the redcoats and Dick
 men, we will see how Bob fares.
 e know, he rode away from the farmhouse at a

By the time he had gone fifty yards the horse was going
 at a run.

He was about a hundred and fifty yards from the house
 when dark forms loomed up in his path.

They were forms of the redcoats.

The redcoats must have seen Bob at the same instant
 that he saw them, for they raised their muskets and fired
 a volley.

Of course, firing so quickly, they did not stop to take aim.

The result was that none of the bullets took effect, though
 some of them came dangerously near.

Bob was through the line of redcoats very quickly.

He dashed onward and soon reached the road.

The horse turned into the road of his own accord, and
 Bob rode onward toward Richmond.

In less than one hour's time Bob rode into Richmond.

Bob hardly knew where to go, but, as luck would have
 it, he did not have to look for Lafayette.

As he struck the main part of the city he came upon
 a body of soldiers marching up the street.

Bob's heart bounded with delight.

The men wore uniforms of Continental blue.

They were patriot soldiers.

Bob rode right up in front of the soldiers and brought
 his horse to a stop.

The street lamps made it light enough so that Bob could
 see quite plainly.

He recognized one of the soldiers in the front ranks.

"Hello, Saunders!" he cried. "Where is General La-
 fayette?"

"He is at that tavern, right over there;" pointing across
 the street.

"Good!" cried Bob. "You men stop right where you
 are until I have seen and had a talk with General Lafayette.
 It is a matter of life or death!"

Bob rode over to the tavern, and, leaping to the ground,
 tossed the bridle rein over a post.

He hastened into the tavern.

"Will you kindly direct me to Lafayette's room?" Bob
 asked of the man behind the counter.

"Front room, upstairs," was the reply.

Bob bounded upstairs, three steps at a time.

He entered the front room without ceremony.

A boyish-looking man sat at a table at one side of the
 room.

This man was General Lafayette.

He looked up in surprise as Bob entered.

General Lafayette was well acquainted with Dick Slater
 and Bob Estabrook, and he recognized Bob instantly.

"What! You, Bob!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I, General Lafayette."

"What is the matter? What has happened? You look excited."

"The 'Liberty Boys' are in great danger, General Lafayette, and I have come to you for aid."

General Lafayette looked excited.

"What is that? Tell me all about it!" he exclaimed.

Bob did so in as few words as possible.

General Lafayette listened, eagerly, and when Bob had finished he leaped to his feet.

"We will go to the aid of the 'Liberty Boys' at once!" he cried. "It is ten miles out to the farmhouse, you say?"

"Yes."

"Then we will have to have horses."

"So you will," agreed Bob. "It would take three hours to march out there, and that would probably be too late to do any good."

"So it would. Well, come along with me. I will have my men scour the city for horses. We will be away within half an hour."

General Lafayette and Bob hastened downstairs and out of doors.

The general made his way to where the soldiers were standing, and ordered them to break ranks and hasten away in search of horses.

He told them to return to this point as soon as they secured horses.

Two or three of the men he sent to the quarters chosen by other portions of his force, and soon all his men were scurrying hither and thither looking for horses.

Not more than half an hour had elapsed when four or five hundred of the patriots had returned to the spot indicated by General Lafayette.

Each of these men had secured a horse somewhere and somehow.

In the majority of instances they had simply entered stables and taken the horses.

"Do you think this force will be large enough to cope with the redcoats?" asked General Lafayette of Bob.

"I think so," replied Bob.

"Then we won't wait for the rest of the men to secure horses. We will go at once with this force. If we were to wait until all had secured horses we might reach the farmhouse too late.

General Lafayette left one of the men behind to tell the patriot soldiers to return to their quarters, when they should appear after he was gone, and then he rode away at the head of the five hundred soldiers.

Bob rode beside General Lafayette.

"I hope we'll be in time," said Bob, as they dashed away.

"I hope so," said General Lafayette.

Meantime, a terrible fight was going on at the farmhouse.

The redcoats made several desperate attempts to break into the house, but the "Liberty Boys" poured such a galling fire into their ranks that they were forced to retire each time.

The redcoats now paused to rest a while.

Their exertions had almost exhausted them.

Dick hoped that they had given up the idea of trying to effect an entrance into the building altogether.

He hardly believed it possible, however.

The redcoats outnumbered Dick and his "Liberty Boys" so greatly that they would be loth to give it up.

The redcoats had not given up.

They were simply resting.

Fifteen minutes later they renewed the attack.

A large number of them reached the building and kept their places beside it, with grim determination.

They fired upward toward the windows from which the "Liberty Boys" were firing, while some of their number did their best to batter down the door.

The "Liberty Boys" fired down upon the redcoats so rapidly that they could not stand it, however, and presently they broke and fled.

They waited perhaps fifteen minutes before making another assault.

This one was fully as vicious as the other had been, and although the "Liberty Boys" repulsed the redcoats again, Dick felt that they could not hope to do so many more times.

"If General Lafayette and his men would only come," thought Dick.

The youth did not know it, of course, but Bob and General Lafayette and his men were at that very moment riding swiftly toward the farmhouse.

The "Liberty Boys" repulsed the redcoats two more times, but the next time the redcoats succeeded in breaking the door down.

Dick heard the crash.

He knew what had happened.

He realized that in a few moments the redcoats would be pouring into the house in great numbers.

He called the "Liberty Boys" out into the hall.

From the landing place at the top of the stairs a good view of the doorway could be had.

The shattered door lay in splinters upon the floor.

The redcoats were already swarming in through the doorway.

The "Liberty Boys" fired volley after volley down upon the redcoats.

As fast as they emptied their weapons, those who were in front passed the empty weapons to those behind them and were given loaded weapons in return.

There were too many of the redcoats, however.

Although many of them were shot down, there were others to take their places, and the hallway downstairs filled up and the redcoats gradually worked their way upstairs.

It would soon be a hand-to-hand combat.

Such a combat could have only one ending.

Although the "Liberty Boys" could and would fight desperately, they would sooner or later have to succumb to superior force.

"Ah! if General Lafayette and his men were only here," thought Dick. "How I would like to turn the tables on the redcoats!"

At this instant a ringing cheer was heard outside.

Then there came the rattle of musketry.

Then there was more cheering and wild yells.

Then another volley.

Never in his life had Dick heard sweeter music.

"We are saved!" he cried. "General Lafayette and his men are here! They will cut these scoundrelly redcoats to pieces! Go for them, boys!"

The "Liberty Boys" rushed forward and down the stairway to attack the redcoats, who were coming up the stairs.

The redcoats who were within the house had heard the firing and the cheering, however.

They had also heard what Dick said, and they took the alarm.

They turned and fled at the top of their speed.

They showed more eagerness to get out of the house than they had shown to get in.

They almost fought with each other to get to the doorway.

At last all had got out of the house and the "Liberty Boys" followed.

Almost the first person Dick ran against, when he emerged from the house, was Bob.

They greeted each other joyously.

Then General Lafayette appeared and shook hands with Dick.

"You got here just in time, General Lafayette. A few minutes longer and it would all have been over. The redcoats were in the house, and would have been too much for us in a hand-to-hand combat."

"I am glad I did get here in time, Dick. Bob tells me that you have been doing well since coming to this part of the country, and that you have been giving Arnold a lot of trouble."

"Yes, we have succeeded in holding him in check, fairly well. He had his entire force here to-night, however, and would have been too much for us."

The coming of Lafayette had put a stop to the work of the redcoats very quickly.

Not knowing how many there were in the attacking party, the redcoats had fled.

Their rout was complete.

Arnold had received a severe check.

THE END.

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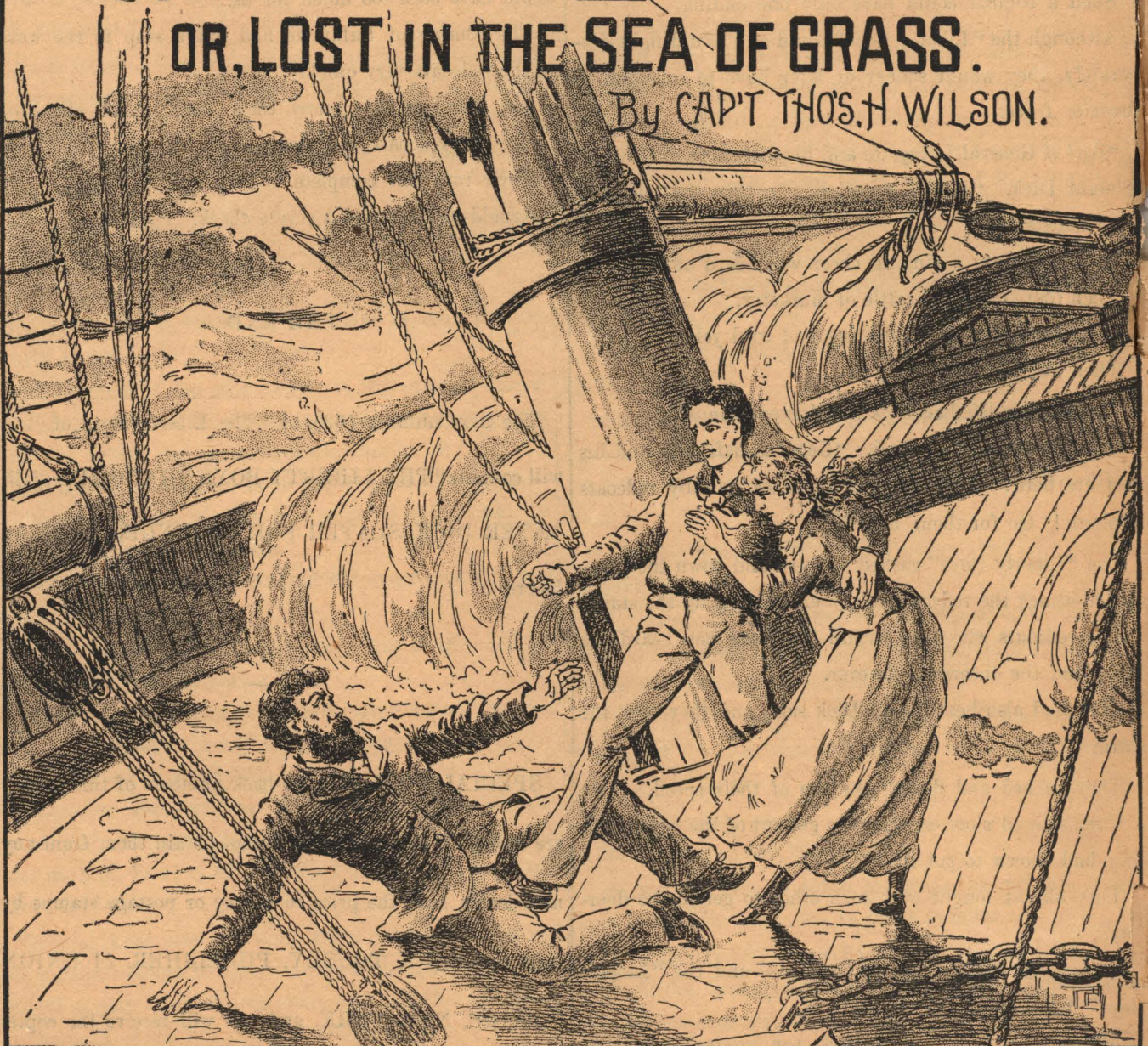
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